

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A ball-and-socket joint, comprising:

a housing;

a bearing shell inserted into said housing;

a ball pivot with a joint ball mounted pivotally in all directions in said bearing shell;

5 a sealing bellows between the housing and the ball pivot, said sealing bellows having a pivot-side edge area;

a ball race fixed on said ball pivot; and

a sliding ring receiving said pivot-side edge area of said sealing bellows, said sliding ring
being slidingly mounted to slide in said ball race and having said sliding ring having a sliding
10 face surface facing the joint ball arranged adjacent to the ball race.

2. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said sliding ring includes a collar made in one piece with said sliding ring.

3. (Original) A joint in accordance with claim 2, wherein:

said collar engages said pivot-side edge area of said sealing bellows.

4. (Original) A joint in accordance with claim 2, wherein:

said collar is made in one piece with an inner side of said sliding ring, said sliding ring
cooperates with said pivot-side edge area of said sealing bellows in at least some areas.

5. (Original) A joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:
said sliding ring includes an axial extension and a radial extension.
6. (Original) A joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:
said race and said sliding ring define a gap between said race and said sliding ring.
7. (Original) A joint in accordance with claim 5, wherein:
said race and said sliding ring define a gap between said axial extension and a surface
of said ball race.
8. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 7, wherein:
said sliding ring has an approximately L-shaped cross section comprising an axial leg
as said axial extension and a radial leg as said radial extension, said radial leg is in sliding
contact with an inner surface of said ball race.
9. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:
said ball race has an approximately U-shaped cross section.
10. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:
said sealing bellows has a surface slidingly in contact with a surface of said ball race.

11. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 10, wherein:

said surface of said sealing bellows which is in contact with said surface of said ball race
has a sealing lip in contact with said surface of said ball race.

12. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 10, wherein:

said surface of said sealing bellows which is in contact with said surface of said ball race
forms a labyrinth seal together with said surface of said ball race.

13. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 10, wherein:

said surface of said sealing bellows which is in contact with said surface of said ball race
has a sealing lip and a second surface of said sealing bellows forms a labyrinth seal together with
said surface of said ball race.

14. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 5, wherein:

said sliding ring is a shaped sheet metal part or a plastic molding;

said sliding ring receives and holds a portion of said sealing bellows between said radial
and axial extensions;

said radial and axial extensions are substantially perpendicular to each other;

said ball race is fixed to said ball pivot.

15. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said ball race has a leg which is in contact with said sliding ring, said leg comprising lugs arranged at spaced locations from one another.

16. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:
said sliding ring has at least one radially extending slot.

17. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:
said pivot-side edge area of said sealing bellows forms a thickened material bead, which is pressed against said ball race or said sliding ring with an elastic pretension.

18. (Original) A joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:
said sliding ring has a disk shape.

19. (Original) A joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:
said sliding ring is slotted.

20. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:
said sliding ring has an approximately L shaped cross section.

21. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:
said sliding ring has an approximately T shaped cross section.

22. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:
said sliding ring has an approximately F shaped cross section.

23. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:
said sliding ring is vulcanized directly to said pivot-side edge area of said sealing bellows.

24. (Currently Amended) A ball-and-socket joint sealing connection for a joint having a housing, a bearing shell inserted into the housing and a ball pivot with a joint ball mounted movably in all directions in the bearing shell, the joint sealing connection comprising:

a sealing bellows connected between the housing and the ball pivot, said sealing bellows having a pivot-side edge area;

a ball race fixed on said ball pivot; and

a sliding ring receiving the pivot-side edge area of said sealing bellows, said sliding ring including an axial extension and a radial extension, said sliding ring being slidably connected to said ball race and slidable relative to said race to slide and move relative to said race and
~~having a sliding face facing the joint ball arranged adjacent to the ball race.~~

25. (Currently Amended) A ball-and-socket joint, comprising:

a housing;

a bearing shell arranged in said housing

5 a ball pivot with a joint ball mounted pivotally in said bearing shell;
a sealing bellows arranged between said housing and said ball pivot, said sealing bellows
including a pivot-side edge area;
a race fixed on said ball pivot; and
a sliding ring receiving said pivot-side edge area of said sealing bellows, said sliding ring
being slidably arranged in said race for sliding movement of said pivot-side edge area and said
10 sliding ring relative to said race.

26. (Currently Amended) A joint in accordance with claim 25, wherein:
said sliding ring has a sliding face surface facing the joint ball and arranged adjacent to
said race, said sliding face surface of said ring sliding around relative to said race.

27. (Currently Amended) A joint in accordance with claim 25, wherein:
said sliding ring is ~~rotatable around~~ movable relative to said race and said ball pivot in
rotational direction as to a central axis of said ball pivot.

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